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1917



IN
PRAISE
OF
WAR

Don C. Seitz



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IN PRAISE OF WAR

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MILITARY AND SEA VERSE

BY

DON C. SEITZ



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
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IN PRAISE OF WAR

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TO
B. F. BRADBURY
LATE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL
N.G., S.M.
SERVANT OF THE RED CROSS

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PRELUDE

*In brazen splendor the armies come
'Mid blare of bugle and crash of drum;
With waving banners of stripes and bars
And promise of Glory that goes with wars—
Glory that dwells in a winding sheet
And corpses litter'd at the War God's feet!*

IN PRAISE OF WAR

IN PRAISE OF WAR

THE dullards dream of a peaceful sloth
While they fatten on soil and sea,
But the world bred life in crashing strife
'Mongst men like you and me!

For war began 'twixt man and man
Where the Dragon's teeth were sown;
From clod to sword they leapt at the word
When Jason threw the stone!

Did we come forth from the teeming earth
To delve and toil and sow,
To tame our lives to dwell in hives,
Or to batter the road we go?

Loud as the drum the answer rings:
We're here to fight and win,
Where victors greet the foe's defeat
And peace is a weakling's sin!

What matters it how the blood is spilled
Or who by the wayside falls?
The War Gods drink at the Styx's brink
When Pluto's trumpet calls!

No fluttering doves in the curdling sky
Can cool the blood of men
Who test their strength by going the length
When the Sword beats down the Pen!

The weak grow strong and the strong grow weak
In the wrestling ring of war;
It calls the brave to the early grave,
It glows in its avatar!

ON THE RAMPART

I saw the soldier stand on the rampart:
Silently, swiftly, he signaled the rescuing host,
Cheered the beleaguered with news of the on-
coming army,
Then fell crumpled and bloody, found by the far-
searching bullet
Aimed by some sharp-shooter hidden and distant.
Boldly another arose tall on the rampart,
Waved, too, the signals, completing the message!
So on the ramparts of life men fall and men follow,
Each waving his message, struggling, completing!

HAIL COLONIA

Ho! Ancient Isles of Britain,
Where freedom stands arrayed
Against the trampling tyrant,
Hold fast and unafraid!

Your sons have heard the summons
To rouse themselves from ease;
They rally to your banners
Across the Seven Seas!

From tropic clime and arctic snow
The loyal legions come
Who hear afar the call to war,
The round-world beat of drum!

New bulwarks of Britannia,
Guards of her seas and lands,
To stand or fall together
Grasping our brothers' hands.

The meteor flag of England
Must more terrific glow.
No sun shall set on Britain yet,
Though stormier winds may blow!

THE WAR HORSES

O PIROUETTING, prancing steeds
That dance so lightly in the forefront of war;
Arched of neck, and flowing mane and tail, with
 nostrils distended,
Thrilled by the bugle and drum like those who
 come after;
Marching on to the end, to victory or to disaster!
O steeds of chestnut and sorrel,
Fearless of flame or of cannon and musket;
Once frolicking foals of the field, bred in the deli-
 cate grasses,
Now iron-hoofed, bit-champing chargers,
Trampling the slain, once, too, in the cradle,
Wrapped in linen and laces, cooing, caressing!

VICTORS OF VIMY

CHEERS for thee, O tall Canadians!
Erect as the ever-green spruce-trees,
Strong as the withes of oak and birch sprouts,
Light in your step as the bark canoe
Skimming the waves of Lake Nipigon;
Swift as the red deer, brave as the grizzly,
Lithe like the panther—lean, too, and tawny;
Impetuous as the north wind over Saskatchewan,
Driving all foes before in resistless advancing.
O valorous victors of Vimy,
To you on the hilltop
Lift we our cheers!

SONG OF THE DRUM

I stir the blood with my rubadub
And cheer the victors on;
I share my life with the squealing fife
In battles lost and won!

I thrill the brave and I fill the grave
And raise the cry "to arms!"
The drum's the thing with the saber's ring
To lift up war's alarms!

I ease the load on the weary road
And tingle tramping toes;
I call the roll for the cannon's toll,
Whether for friends or foes!

I spell defeat as I sound retreat
On fields with carnage red;
I play the tune to a bloody rune—
The requiem of the dead!

To the bugle's call as the colors fall
I add the rat-tat's play,
When the sun goes down with murky frown
To end the soldier's day!

For a thousand years of hopes and fears
The drum has led the way;
It rouses the old, the young, the bold,
And nerves men for the fray!

NIGHT AT GETTYSBURG

By day Golgotha sleeps, but when night comes
The armies rally to the beating drums;
Columns are formed and banners wave
O'er legions summoned from the grave.
The wheat-field waves with reddened grain
And the wounded wail and writhe in pain.
The hard-held Bloody Angle drips anew
And Pickett charges with a ghostly crew,
While where the road to the village turns
Stands the tall shadow of old John Burns!

THE BATTERY GUNS

GLINTS of steel, with the guns awheel
Fast down the dusty road!
The caissons jolt as the horses bolt
Away with their lurching load!

Ho! Death sits near to the cannoneer
Who rides with shot and shell;
To face the foe the batteries go
In the battle's raging hell!

Up with the guns, the order runs;
Take heed who bar the way.
Sure is the mark—when cannon bark
The war dogs are at bay!

Red is the field in its harvest yield
Where the grapes of wrath are pressed.
It's do and die or turn and fly
When the guns stand six abreast!

DRUM DRILL ON HORSENECK

ACROSS the valley on the Horseneck Hill the drums
are beating;
The air is still and vibrant with the thrill of the
wild music,
Rousing fierce memories of the long ago,
Of redcoat horsemen on the Old Post Road,
And farm lads knitted in the battle line,
While Putnam's ghost rides down the steps again!

MEXICO

THE vultures circling Montezuma's halls
Await the victims whom the Despot calls.
The blood-stained Aztec altars blaze anew
To light the murder of the Patriot few!
Mockery of Freedom! They die in vain
Who seek to free their country from its chain!
Such curse laid Cortez on this luckless land,
The blighting menace of the iron hand,
Till Eagle and Serpent in fierce embrace
Shall end the turmoil of the Toltec race!

AVE AVIATOR

I HAD this vision on a starlit night:
Standing alone upon the mountain-top
When from the valley where camp-fires blazed
An aviator rose, birdlike and graceful,
Dropping beneath the cumb'ring clay of earth
Until he passed the level of the peak
And came into the radiance of the heavens;
Then from the cliffs roar'd an outpouring
Of shot and shrapnel, glowing in the gloom,
In brilliant lighting of the upper air
Through which the wing'd warrior moved
Like Sindbad's Roc, replying to the fire.
High he flew, higher follow'd the shrapnel
Until it found him, darkening his flight.
The wreck of plane and engine fell to land,
But not the airman, for to him
The golden path to glory opened wide,
Paved with the tender sheen of moonbeams,
Over which he strode, deathless, immortal,
Into the company of all the heroes!

THE FALKLAND FIGHT

GONE are the ways of the well-fought ship,
And of pike and cutlass free,
Where the muzzles meet in the fighting fleet
Broadside on the rolling sea!

Yard-arm and yard-arm no more interlock
In the grip of the ocean fray,
For the sea dogs bark at their distant mark
Two leagues and a half away!

No glory here in the long-range reach—
No Blake's or Nelson's fame—
But screeching yells of the lyddite shells
And death in their yellow flame!

WAR AND LIFE

WE take no heed as we tramp the fields
 Of the tribes in turf and grass;
The busy ants and the beetles brown
 We crush as we idly pass.

Yet moan to the Gods of War and Hate
 When men in a battle fall
Who pay the price in blood and life
 For the evil deeds of all!

THE SWORD OF KANEMOTO

SLENDER sword with shark-skin hilt,
Scabbard decked in lacquered gilt,
Forged of steel in the long ago
By the master-smith Kanemoto.

Five hundred years has it held its edge,
Guarding with honor every pledge,
Loved by its owners, kept with care,
Treasured like a jewel rare.

Clean is the blade as the soul of him
Who bore it first in the ages dim;
Unfit to live unless fit to die,
This the code of the Samurai.

Gift to a friend in friendly trust
Never to let it grime with rust,
Or to turn its blade against the hand
Who gave it, or 'gainst his noble land!

It gleams like a ray from the distant stars,
A flashing flame from the planet Mars,
True to all friends and strong to the foe—
Honorable Sword of Kanemoto!

IN THE FIRE-HOLE

THE captain's fine in his coat of blue,
The mate is big and handsome too,
But of the hundreds in the crew,
It's the coolies who make her go!

Eight hours off and four hours on,
Shoveling coal till the voyage is done,
Stirring the flame till the race is won—
Sweat the coolies who make her go!

Not even a name on the ship's pay-roll,
Only a number to take its toll,
Just small mites in the human whole—
Naked coolies who make her go!

No hint above of what's below,
Keeping alive the fiery glow,
Driving the engines fast or slow—
Yellow coolies who make her go!

Tumble 'em up from the hell in the hold;
See how they shiver out in the cold—
Eyes like a cat's and faces of gold—
These the coolies who make her go!

WIRELESS

MYSTERIES are more on sea than shore:
So now to the wireless hark;
Buzzing like bees in angry seas,
It speeds to the given mark.

Out of the blight of the darkest night
It feels its distant way,
Finding its ship in the deepest dip
Amid the ocean's spray.

The sea sends its ghosts in misty hosts
To frighten the lands away;
St. Elmo's fires and words without wires
In the storm and lightnings play.

Perhaps lost souls that seek their goals
Go bearing o'er the foam
The searching spark in its world-wide arc
That brings the message home!

THE TYPHOON

ROTTEN ship with a Chinese crew,
Engine weak and a broken screw,
Headed across the Yellow Sea—
Hell of a place f'r a man to be!

Sky of copper and sea of brass,
Breathless until the death winds pass.
Air stands still in the tropic noon—
This the path of the dread typhoon!

Somewhere north of Luzon's strand
Rises this wind with awful hand
To smite the ships in the Yellow Sea,
Sending poor souls to eternity!

With a rush of foam and frightful blare,
Storm clouds blacken the noonday flare;
The waves shoot upward toward the sky
And torn craft on their beam ends lie!

Boiler loose and her stack askew,
Masts both gone and most of the crew;
Lucky to float and see the day
We who've been in the Typhoon's way!

In whirling gusts the gale goes by,
Whistling a dirge for those who die!
But who's to care for such as we
Who leave their lives in the Yellow Sea?

A SEA TURN

THIS the ballad of the sailor lad
Who sails on the slippery sea:
It's swab and wipe to the Bo's'n's pipe,
An' soup that's made o' the pea!

A waif o' a man who eats from a pan
Full o' beans an' ebony beef,
Who sleeps in a hole like a blink-eyed mole
An' ends his days on a reef!

It's pull an' haul to the Bo's'n's call,
With curses an' kicks between,
An' come an' go with a biff an' a blow,
Is life on the ocean's sheen!

Old Neptune's a guy you'd better not try
To fool if you want to live long.
He'll shiver your timbers an' break you to flinders
In spite o' the sailor-man's song!

YARN OF THE ESSEX

OLD Salem—"peaceful" in the Hebrew tongue—
Belied its name when Salem old was young.
Her seamen knew the buccaneers
And manned the waspish privateers;
Sought strange cargoes, ventured far,
Carrying spices and rare attar.
Setting their sails for the Isle of France,
Fighting and trading as fell the chance,
Working their way with Yankee loads
To godowns in the Canton roads.
Scornful of ease, eager for fight,
Certain always their cause was right!
Prayed on the land, fought on sea,
Jealous warders of Liberty!
No wind so ill but blew them fair,
No deed too bold for them to share!
In the year ninety-eight John Crapaud
Treated himself to an embargo
Barring the sea to the English race,
Shutting the door in Salem's face.

Without as much as *s'il vous plait*
The Frenchmen get in Salem's way:
Frog-eating sons of *parlez-vous*,
Who d'ye think's afraid of you?
Day of wrath and judgment too
For the careless sons of *parlez-vous*.
Salem, aflame, a ship will give
In which her country's fame shall live.
Quick comes the cash, the will and deed
To fill a share of the nation's need.
Shipwrights rally and hammers ring,
While lowing kine the timbers bring:
Hickory from the Hampshire dells,
Cedar and oak from the Essex fells,
Whispering pines and hackmatack
That shade the rippling Merrimac.
The creaking axles bear the mast,
Drawn by strong oxen girded fast,
Marked with King's arrows in days of Kings,
Measuring years by the hundred rings.
Decked with garlands of green and rose,
The big stick to the ship-yard goes.
Now she's together on the stocks,
Ready for the launching blocks.
Smartest and tautest of warship rigs

Fashioned and built by Enos Briggs,
Mild "Deacon" Briggs in his Sunday pew—
Something different driving a crew!
Made like a watch from truck to wheel,
Copper-fastened from deck to keel.
Whip-sawed plank and adz-trimmed spars—
Planed from ribs to capstan bars!
Essex her name as she deftly glides
Into the meeting of the tides:
Fine and famous launching day
When the *Essex* goes on her ocean way!
Stately and proud she leaves the land,
Edward Preble in command:
Braver Captain and better ship
Never went on a trial trip.
Hear her guns through the growing years
Bark at the Bashaw of Tangiers,
Taming the Corsairs of Sallee,
Widening the pathway of the sea!
Flaunting the flag in foreign eyes
Under Mediterranean skies.
First to bear the bannered bars
Beneath the cross of Southern stars;
Rounding Good Hope and then the Horn
To show the world a navy born

Fearless and free on every wave,
Meeting the bravest of the brave!
Startling the Kings of the Cannibal Isles,
Winning from Queens their dusky smiles,
Finding Haven at Marquesa
And Fate in Valparaiso Bay.
Cornered and caught by two to one—
Not conquered till her duty's done!
Breeding a Farragut for Mobile Bay—
A second Porter for a later day!

THE BURIAL OF JOHN PAUL JONES

(For six years the Commodore's body remained in a hallway at the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, awaiting the erection of the Chapel designed as a fitting tomb!)

The publication of this poem in *Harper's Weekly* produced proper action.

UNDER a stairway, back in the hall,
Waiting to hear his country's call,
Coffin'd in lead—a bundle of bones—
Lies what is left of the great Paul Jones!

Found in its tomb by the merest chance,
Borne with acclaim from the land of France.
Brought with the pride of a Nation's guest
To sleep forever in splendid rest

Here in the school where his trade is taught,
Where the lads learn how a battle's fought
And how a hero's reward is paid
In promises broken ere they're made!



First to the air he tossed the stars,
The glorious flag with crimson bars—
Who steer'd the *Ranger* across the sea,
Beating the British to make us free.

Deep in his debt is this selfish land
Which pays the bill with a grudging hand,
So bear him back to the rough North Sea
Where the chalk cliffs rise against the lea.

Red are the waves where the *Richard* sank
Deep on the edge of the Doggerbank;
Here is a grave made ready to hand
Better and braver than one on land.

A couple of shot, a canvas shroud,
A little thunder of cannon loud:
The thing is over; secure in Fame,
He needs no stone to mark his name!

• • • • •

Lucky the Captains who heard the hail
And went to the depths in fight or gale,
Never neglected back in a hall,
Awaiting in vain their country's call!

DIRGE

LIGHTLY part,
O waves of the sea!
Make way for the *Maine*,
Who cometh to thee!

Whisper winds
To the ghosts of the brave
Who follow their ship
To her ocean grave!

Rust and rest
Where the galleons lie
In the crystal depths
'Neath the summer sky!

THE SEA CALL

O driving gale
And restless, roaring sea
Calling, calling, calling
Forever calling me!

THE METAL MEN-O'-WAR

(The U. S. sloop-of-war *Portsmouth* will be sold for junk.—*News item.*)

No more the sails are spread,
But now there come instead
Fortresses of brass and steel,
Moved by the whirling wheel.

Men-o'-War no longer creep
Through the mazes of the deep,
Manning yards and backing sails,
Bursting foam and burying rails.

Button's press and lightning's flow
Tell the way the warships go;
Submarines beneath the sea
Lead a life of mystery.

Ten-mile range, not gun to gun,
Is the modern way the battle's run;

Port to port will never meet
In the fighting of the fleet.

The teleseme and the fire-tower
Now direct the martial power;
Cutlass blades are out of use
And wireless feeds the firing fuse.

Soon we'll sit upon the shore
And guide by switch the battle's roar—
Waging warfare by machine,
Keeping hands and faces clean!

LIGHT IN THE EAST

WHEN the evening sun drops low,
Shrouded in the farewell glow,
Leaving night to take its place
While it lights the yellow race,
Greater light it takes along
To th nighty yellow throng.
Freedom on its westward way
Cuts the cords in Far Cathay!

AT THE OUTER MARK

THIS is “The Shippe of Fooles”—
It floats along
In tears, ’mid laughter and a song,
Without a Pilot, drifting in the dark
Beyond the Beacon at the outer mark
Of Life’s deep channel.

“What ship is that?” the hail.
It is the vessel bearing those who fail
In Earth’s endeavors,
Tugging at the sail
Against cross-currents of the wind and tide,
Yet in whose bodies Hope and Faith abide
Until they fall into the whirlpool!

RUSSIA

BLIND Giant groping toward Freedom's sun!
What hand shall guide thee till the journey's won?

TO WOODROW WILSON

"No winde makes for him that hath no intended port
to sail unto."—Montaigne, Book II., Chap. I.

HE gains no wind who has no port in view,
But drifteth vainly with a listless crew;
The favoring breeze for him with firm-held helm—
No storm or breakers can him overwhelm!

BALLAD OF NEW YORK BAY

An admirable tug-boat
Hitched to a car-float
 Nav-i-gated on New York Bay,
When a warship wide
With thunder and pride
 Told the tug to git out o' the way.
“Ho! master of yon tug-boat,”
 The haughty captain cried,
“Come steer away from our vessel gay
 Lest you make us miss the tide!”
Then the master of the tug-boat
Hitched close up to the car-float
 And uttered a loud defi:
“I don’t care a damn if you are Uncle Sam,
 I won’t git out o’ the w’y!
This here car-float an’ this tug-boat
 Has the right to stay where they be.
If we keep to starbud and you to the larbud
 There’s room enough here for three!”

The bo's'n blowed and the tug-boat towed,
 But never an inch she shied
Till the warship bold gave word to hold
 And wait for another tide!

NON VICTIS!

“PEACE without victory!” How dull it sounds
To those who yearn for battles and the wounds
Of war and death, the heritage of hate,
And age-long quarrels to disturb the state!

“Peace without victory!” How light the words
To those who turn the plowshares into swords,
Trampling the growing harvests on Life’s plain
Into a bloody mire of grief and pain!

“Peace without victory!” The message rings
To save the Nations from the sins of Kings,
Giving to Man the right to keep his own,
Whether it be the desert or the sown!

“Peace without victory!” Lo! the cause is won
With Peace the Victor when the fight is done,
When Might bows low, and Right resumes its
sway

In glorious welcome of a better day!

NORTHERN LIGHTS

SOMEWHERE north of the Pole, you know,
Somebody runs a dynamo,
Lighting the skies in pink and red
After the bears have gone to bed.

The glow comes up when the sun goes down,
Just as the lamps light up the town,
Putting to blush the moon and stars
With the play of its rosy, radiant bars

Whoever runs this dynamo,
White or black or Esquimau,
Has us beat on this mundane sphere
Painting up the atmosphere!

He's headquarters for wave and watt,
Squeezing the juice in some polar spot,
Hiding the plant in the ice and snow—
The busy, whizzing dynamo!

Perhaps us chaps in the engine-room,
When we throw a switch to break the gloom,
We steal but a bit from the dynamo
Hidden away in the ice and snow!

GET BUSY! GET BUSY! GET BUSY!

THERE'LL be plenty to sing of the rattle and ring
Of saber and scabbard and battle's grim hazard,
But here is a rune to fit any tune,
That should reach every ear, far off and near:
Get busy! Get busy! Get busy!

There'll be plenty of thrill in the trumpet's loud
trill
For those who may come to the beat of the
drum,
Who will rally to fight for freedom and right;
But work has a call, 'tis a tocsin for all:
Get busy! Get busy! Get busy!

Now's the time for a show at the shovel and
hoe,
To fatten the field and brace up the yield
Till two blades appear where one did last year;
But it cannot be done if you loaf in the sun:
Get busy! Get busy! Get busy!

More than powder or shot is the fruit of the lot
And if all do their share there'll be foodstuff
 to spare,
With enough, if you please, for our friends over-
seas;
So all bear a hand and stir up the land:
 Get busy! Get busy! Get busy!

BURDENS

THE man cried to the Heavens:
“I am sick of my burdens!”
The kind gods replied:
“We will free you.”
Then fell from his shoulders
The wearisome, chafing loads.
Freed, he leapt forth, exulting and prancing,
And cried again to the Heavens:
“Give me something to lift!”

LIBERTY ALIGHT

SHE gives but half a welcome, when shrouded in
the night,
To those who cross the ocean in search of Free-
dom's light.
The tiny spark in her lifted hand is but a glow-
worm's gleam;
Let's set a blaze like the dazzling sun with the
help of arc and steam!
Too long has she stood in darkness—too long in
midnight drear—
Let's light the sky about her as bright as the day-
time clear!
O ye who play with the lightning and kilowatts,
wires and ohms,
Brighten the New World's threshold for these
who come to our homes,
From the mire of war and murder, away from
quarrels of Kings,
To the land of light and liberty—the land of
Better Things!

They who cross the ocean in search of Freedom's
star
Shall find it blazing brightly inside the harbor bar
In the gloom of night the welcome shall shine like
the orb of day
And they who look for Freedom will know they
have found the way!

DIES IRÆ

HASTEN, O Lord, the dreadful day
When the Kings of Earth shall stand
Below Thy feet at the judgment seat,
With the People on either hand!

The People, who through the myriad years
Have limped 'neath load and chain,
Whose tears and blood in purple flood
Will not have flowed in vain!

Then they who were slain in battle
Or stood on the scaffold high
May call for grace before Thy face,
Where the Kings in the dust shall lie!

THE END

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